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General and complete disarmament: prohibition of the dumping of radioactive wastes

Note verbale dated 4 September 2001 from the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and, on behalf of the member countries of the Rio Group, has the honour to transmit a communiqué on the transport of radioactive material and hazardous wastes (see annex) adopted at the twentieth regular session of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Rio Group, held in Santiago, Chile on 27 March 2001.

The Permanent Mission of Chile requests that this note and the annexed communiqué should be circulated as a document of the fifth-sixth session of the General Assembly, under item 85 (c), "Prohibition of the dumping of radioactive wastes".

* A/56/150.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 4 September 2001 from the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Communiqué of the Rio Group on the transport of radioactive material and hazardous wastes

We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Rio Group, meeting in the city of Santiago, Chile, on 27 March 2001, at the twentieth regular session, express our concern about the transit of radioactive material and hazardous wastes along routes near the coasts, or along navigable courses of member countries, in view of the risks of damage involved and the harmful effects for the health of coastal populations and for the ecosystems of the marine and Antarctic environment.

We reaffirm our commitment to strengthen the international regime on the safety of the transport of radioactive material, with a view to achieving more effective legal regulation in this respect.

We recall that the norms of international law which are in force, especially the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, recognize the sovereignty of coastal States over their territorial sea and their jurisdiction in the area of the protection and preservation of the marine environment in their respective exclusive economic zones. Other States should cooperate towards the fulfilment of this responsibility by maintaining strict control over vessels flying their flag which traverse the waters of adjacent jurisdictions, in order to avoid the risks of pollution.

We urge the international community to ensure the early application of the mechanisms established by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the International Maritime Organization in relation to security measures applicable to the transport of radioactive material and hazardous wastes and to adopt norms to supplement them, especially in aspects relating to guarantees on the non-pollution of the marine environment, the exchange of information on the routes selected, the communication of contingency plans in case of accidents, the commitment to recover materials in the event of spills (or loss of materials through sinking or other causes), decontamination of the affected areas and the establishment of mechanisms and effective norms for liability in the event of damage.

Santiago, Chile, 27 March 2001.